

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND claims 1 and 14, as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus comprising:

sheet stacking means for stacking sheets;

sheet processing means for processing the sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means;

a sheet holding portion which stores supplied sheets while preceding sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means are processed by the sheet processing means;

sheet conveying means for conveying the sheets stored in the sheet holding portion to the sheet stacking means in a conveying direction;

an abutment stopper, provided in the sheet holding portion, against which ~~the~~ upstream edges in the conveying direction of the supplied sheets abut;

moving means for moving the supplied sheets in a direction opposite to the conveying direction to abut the upstream edges thereof against the abutment stopper; and

a holding member which holds the supplied sheet sheets in the sheet holding portion with their upstream edges abutted against the abutment stopper until the last sheet of the sheets to be stored is supplied in the sheet holding portion,

wherein the sheet conveying means conveys the stored sheets to the sheet stacking means from the sheet holding portion when a downstream edge in the conveying direction of the last sheet of the sheets to be stored has projected from the downstream edges of the sheets held in the sheet holding portion by a predetermined amount.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising control means for controlling the number of sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion according to a processing time of the sheet processing means.

4. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising control means for performing:

a first action in a case in which the sheet is an ordinary sheet, the first action including subjecting the preceding sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means to processing with the sheet processing means and simultaneously causing the subsequent sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion; and

a second action in a case in which the sheet is a specific sheet, the second action including not causing the specific sheet to be stored in the sheet holding portion but, after the discharging of the preceding sheets, causing the specific sheet to pass through the sheet holding portion to be stacked on the sheet stacking means.

5. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the specific sheet is at least one selected from the group consisting of a sheet with a length equal to or larger than a predetermined length, a sheet for an overhead

projector, a color printed sheet, a sheet designated as a top cover, a sheet designated as thick paper, a sheet designated as thin paper, and a sheet with a tab.

6. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet processing means is a stapler for stitching a sheet stack.

7. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet conveying means comprises a first rotary member and a second rotary member which rotate in contact with the sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means from both sides of the sheets.

8. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet holding portion holds the supplied sheets linearly.

9. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet holding portion comprises:  
moving means for moving the supplied sheets to abut the upstream edges thereof against the abutment stopper.

10. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 3 or 4,

wherein the sheet processing means is a stapler for stitching a sheet stack, and the control means increases the number of sheets, which are stored in the sheet holding means, in proportion to positions to be stitched by the stapler.

11. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet; and  
a sheet processing apparatus which applies processing to the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means,  
wherein the sheet processing apparatus is a sheet processing apparatus according to any one of claims 1, and 3 to 9.

12. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;  
the sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1 which applies processing to the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means; and  
control means for controlling the number of the sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion according to a processing time of the sheet processing means.

13. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;  
the sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1 which applies processing to the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means; and

control means for performing:

a first action in a case in which the sheet is an ordinary sheet, the first action including subjecting the preceding sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means to processing with the sheet processing means and simultaneously causing the subsequent sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion; and

a second action in a case in which the sheet is a specific sheet, the second action including not causing the specific sheet to be stored in the sheet holding portion but, after the discharging of the preceding sheets, causing the specific sheet to pass through the sheet holding portion to be stacked on the sheet stacking means.

14. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus, comprising:

a processing tray on which the sheets are stacked;

a processing unit which processes the sheets stacked on the processing tray;

a sheet holding portion which stores supplied sheets while preceding sheets stacked on the processing tray are processed by the processing unit;

a sheet discharging rotary member which conveys the supplied sheets stored in the sheet holding portion to the processing tray in a conveying direction;

an abutment stopper, provided in the sheet holding portion, against which ~~the~~ upstream edges in the conveying direction of the supplied sheets abut;

a return roller which moves the supplied sheets in a direction opposite to the conveying direction to abut the upstream edges of the sheets against the abutment stopper; and

a holding member which holds the supplied sheets in the sheet holding portion with their upstream edges ~~in a conveying direction~~ thereof, abutted against the abutment stopper until the last sheet of the sheets to be stored is supplied in the sheet holding portion,

wherein the sheet discharging rotary member conveys the stored sheets to the processing tray from the sheet holding portion when a downstream edge in the conveying direction of the last sheet of the sheets to be stored has projected from the downstream edges of the sheets held in the sheet holding portion by a predetermined amount.

15. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising a control portion which controls the number of sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion according to a processing time of the processing unit.

16. (Previously Presented) An sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising a control portion which performs:

a first action in a case in which the sheet is an ordinary sheet, the first action including subjecting the preceding sheets stacked on the processing tray to processing with the processing unit and simultaneously causing the subsequent sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion; and

a second action in a case in which the sheet is a specific sheet, the second action including not causing the specific sheet to be stored in the sheet holding portion but, after the discharging of the preceding sheets, causing the specific sheet to pass through the sheet holding portion to be stacked on the processing tray.

17. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 16,

wherein the specific sheet is at least one selected from the group consisting of a sheet with a length equal to or larger than a predetermined length, a sheet for an overhead projector, a color printed sheet, a sheet designated as a top cover, a sheet designated as thick paper, a sheet designated as thin paper, and a sheet with a tab.

18. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14,

wherein the processing unit is a stapler which stitches a sheet stack.

19. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14,

wherein the sheet discharging rotary member comprises a first rotary member and a second rotary member which rotate in contact with the sheets stacked on the processing tray from both sides of the sheets.

20. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14,

wherein the sheet holding portion holds the supplied sheets linearly.

21. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14,

wherein the sheet holding portion comprises:

a return roller which moves the supplied sheets to abut the upstream edges of the sheets against the abutment stopper.

22. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 15 or 16,

wherein the processing unit is a stapler for stitching a sheet stack, and the control portion increases the number of sheets, which are stored in the sheet holding portion, in proportion to positions to be stitched by the stapler.

23. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet; and  
a sheet processing apparatus which applies processing to the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means,

wherein the sheet processing apparatus is a sheet processing apparatus according to claims 14-21.

24. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;  
the sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14 which applies processing to  
the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means; and  
a control portion which controls the number of the sheets to be stored in the sheet  
holding portion according to a processing time of the processing unit.

25. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;  
the sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14 which applies processing to  
the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means; and  
a control portion which performs:  
a first action in a case in which the sheet is an ordinary sheet, the first  
action including subjecting the preceding sheets stacked on the processing tray to stitch  
processing with the processing unit and simultaneously causing the subsequent sheets to be  
stored in the sheet holding portion; and  
a second action in a case in which the sheet is a specific sheet, the second action  
including not causing the specific sheet to be stored in the sheet holding portion but, after the  
discharging of the preceding sheets, causing the specific sheet to pass through the sheet holding  
portion to be stacked on the processing tray.